Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A contents-information transmission system comprising:

a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned;

means provided in the contents-information handling apparatus for storing a first certificate contents-information piece which is copyrighted and which is representative of said one of the different levels:

an authentication apparatus;

means for transmitting the first certificate contents-information piece said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus;

means provided in the authentication apparatus for storing second certificate contents-information pieces which are representative of the different levels respectively and which are copyrighted;

means provided in the authentication apparatus for comparing said transmitted first certificate contents-information piece with the second certificate contents-information pieces to decide whether or not said transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and

means provided in the authentication apparatus for indicating the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces;

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; and in response to a result of said comparing.

(SN 09/748,176)

means for inhibiting transmission of the contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to none of the second certificate contents-information pieces.

2. (Currently amended) An authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the contents-information handling apparatus storing a first certificate contents-information piece which is copyrighted and which is representative of said one of the different levels, the authentication apparatus comprising:

means for receiving the first certificate contents-information piece said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus;

means for storing second certificate contents-information pieces which are representative of the different levels respectively and which are copyrighted;

means for comparing said received first certificate contents-information piece with the second certificate contents-information pieces to decide whether or not said received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and

means for indicating the received first certificate contents-information piece when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces;

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; and in response to a result of said comparing.

means for inhibiting transmission of the contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to none of the second certificate contents-information pieces.

3-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) A method of data transmission between an authentication apparatus and a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the contents-information handling apparatus storing a first certificate contents-information piece which is copyrighted and which is representative of said one of the different levels, the authentication apparatus storing second certificate contents-information pieces which are representative of the different levels respectively and which are copyrighted, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting the first certificate contents-information piece said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus;

comparing said transmitted first certificate contents-information piece with the second certificate contents-information pieces to decide whether or not said transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and

indicating the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces;

selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; and in response to a result of said comparing.

inhibiting transmission of the contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the transmitted first certificate contents-information piece is equal to none of the second certificate contents-information pieces.

7-21. (Canceled)

(SN 09/748,176)

22. (Currently amended) A recording medium storing a computer program for controlling an authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, <u>the contents-information handling apparatus storing a first certificate contents-information piece which is copyrighted and which is representative of said one of the different levels, the authentication apparatus storing second certificate contents-information pieces which are representative of the different levels respectively and which are copyrighted,</u> the computer program comprising the steps of receiving <u>the first certificate contents-information piece</u> ~~said one of the different levels~~ from the contents-information handling apparatus; comparing said received <u>first certificate contents-information piece with the second certificate contents-information pieces to decide whether or not said received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces;</u> ~~one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and~~ <u>indicating the received first certificate contents-information piece when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces;</u> ~~selectively~~ permitting ~~and inhibiting~~ transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus <u>when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to one of the second certificate contents-information pieces; and</u> ~~in response to a result of said comparing.~~ <u>inhibiting transmission of the contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus when it is decided that the received first certificate contents-information piece is equal to none of the second certificate contents-information pieces.</u>

23-25. (Canceled)

(SN 09/748,176)